

## kill the Octopus

First, the roar of water. Then, the child.

This is how the dream unfolds.

I stand on the shoreline, where dark waves come crashing down on the rocks. Out at sea, alone, a child is crying. She clings to the mast of the smallest sailboat in the world.

I run straight into the water.

A veil of algae trails behind me as I swim my way into the deep. Soon, the sea turns ink-black and bottomless. Now is when the Octopus comes.

I let my body go limp and steel myself for it. This is the trick to moving forward.

*You must let it happen again.*

Dark ripples precede the tentacles. Huge, slimy, they wrap themselves first around my limbs—then all of it, all of it—leaving no thing untouched. Eyes shut, tight throat, I die and wait it out for decades... Then pull out my knife and stab the Octopus with all my might.

Wounded, the Octopus retreats into the depths while tall waves jerk the boat ferociously. The child screams my name over and over.

*Hurry.*

Wind blows itself into a tempest, and it is here that I always drown. But this time, her little face—our face—shines on me like a lighthouse, and so I push and push against the sea, until I crash into something like a wall.

This is new. Not a wall but a fishnet: cold, iron-hard, towering between me and the child.

The child. Her boat is crumbling under the waves; mast gone, she's about to fall into the water.

*Hurry.*

I start to climb the net. So close... I will save her this time. But a sudden gush of wind knocks her off the boat.

*NO!*

I climb faster, swinging my torso over the top.

I never see the spikes.

They come out the other side of me, and water shines ruby down below.

*The child.*

The current brings her to the net. She's so small, her tiny arms fit through the holes. Barely four years old.

Before I bleed out, I give her my message.

"It did happen."

She clings to me, eyelids heavy with the things she knows. Barely four years old.

"I am here."

Indigo gives way to ink and I know it's ending. So I say the words.

"One day, I will kill the Octopus."